

PRESS RELEASE
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**IHRDC Releases Report to coincide with President Ahmadinejad's visit to the UN:
"Community under Siege: The Ordeal of the Bahá'ís of Shiraz"**

(New Haven, Connecticut, September 21, 2007) – In the spring of 1983 leading members of the Bahá'í community in the Iranian town of Shiraz were given a stark choice by the local Revolutionary Court: recant or die. Twenty-one members of this religious community refused to convert to Islam and were executed.

The IHRDC report, **Community under Siege: The Ordeal of the Bahá'ís of Shiraz**, tells the story of the largest mass execution of Iranian Bahá'ís since the Islamic Revolution. Many of the victims were young women. The youngest victim was just seventeen years-old. Many other members of the community were also imprisoned and abused. This is the first independent report published about these events.

The ordeal of the Bahá'ís of Shiraz is emblematic of the treatment of the Bahá'í Faith by the Shi'a establishment in Iran. **Community under Siege** exposes the religious intolerance of the Islamic Republic and puts a human face on the suffering of this persecuted minority. The report also offers evidence of official collusion in the Shiraz executions at the highest levels of the Iranian government, including the personal involvement of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Members of the Bahá'í Faith remain every bit as vulnerable in today's Iran as they were in 1983. The Bahá'í Faith is denied recognition as a religion under Iranian law; it receives no protections under the constitution of the Islamic Republic, and the community periodically faces coordinated campaigns of discrimination and persecution at the hands of the state. Sites of great religious significance have been destroyed and private property confiscated.

Last year the Supreme Leader's office instructed military and interior ministry officials to gather intelligence on the remaining members of the Bahá'í community in Iran. As recently as May 2006, fifty-four Bahá'í youths were detained in Shiraz simply for initiating and participating in a local multi-faith education project for under-privileged children.

"The regime of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad indulges in the same abusive rhetoric as the government officials who sentenced the Shiraz victims to death in 1983," said Tom Parker, Executive Director of the IHRDC. "The Bahá'í community of Iran is still under siege today and desperately needs the support of international institutions like the United Nations. The government of Iran must be held accountable for its treatment of religious minorities."

Community under Siege is an in-depth case study produced to accompany an earlier IHRDC report, **A Faith Denied: The Persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran**. It is based on a comprehensive study of contemporary accounts, original documents and fresh interviews by the IHRDC. The IHRDC is a New Haven-based non-profit organization with the mission of documenting the human rights situation in Iran.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The IHRDC report **Community under Siege: The Ordeal of the Bahá'ís of Shiraz** and documentary appendices are available on IHRDC's website at <http://www.iranhrdc.org>.

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